

Mill Valley Oral History Program

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LARRY “THE HAT” LAUTZKER

**An Oral History Interview
Conducted by Debra Schwartz in 2017**

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INTERVIEWER: Debra Schwartz
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In this oral history, Mill Valley merchant and community events organizer Larry “the Hat” Lautzker recounts the story of his life and how he came to find his home in Mill Valley. Born in Brooklyn, New York, Larry came out to California on a LSD-fueled bus trip in 1970, and moved into the Good Earth Commune in the Haight-Ashbury district. Larry shares wild stories from this period, giving a detailed description of the Commune’s resistance to the “redevelopment” of the neighborhood. In the mid-1970s, Larry moved over to Marin, working in the music business as a booking agent for local bands, and eventually producing big shows at the Phoenix Theater in Petaluma. Larry recounts how he got into fashion in the mid-1980s, opening his first clothing store in San Rafael in 1986. A few years later, he moved his store Famous for Our Look—subsequently renamed Famous4—to Mill Valley, initially to a location on East Blithedale before settling in downtown at 96 Throckmorton. Larry describes how he became active in the community, revamping the Memorial Day Parade and establishing the notorious “Fashion Police,” as well as his development of the Block Party. Larry concludes this oral history expressing how blessed he feels to be part of Mill Valley and his joy at giving back to the community.

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**Oral History of Larry “the Hat” Lautzker
July 10th, 2017**

Editor’s note: This transcript has been reviewed by Larry “the Hat” Lautzker, who made minor corrections and clarifications to the original.

0:00:01 Debra Schwartz: Today is July 10th, 2017. My name is Debra Schwartz, and I’m sitting here on behalf of the Mill Valley Historical Society and Library with Larry “the Hat” Lautzker. Did I say that right?

0:00:18 Larry Lautzker: That was said perfectly.

0:00:20 Debra Schwartz: Larry, it’s taken me about a year to finally have this opportunity to sit down and talk with you.

0:00:29 Larry Lautzker: I’m very busy.

0:00:30 Debra Schwartz: You are very busy.

0:00:32 Larry Lautzker: I’m hard to pin down. [chuckles] But when you do, as they say about most Aquarians — I never shared this with you, but I found a little astrological sign about Aquarians and it said: “Aquarians are the wind that blows the change through mankind.” Edison and Darwin and nine of the 20 people who signed the Declaration of Independence were Aquarians. It’s interesting. They’re very conservative by nature, but outrageous when it’s called for, and very difficult to pin down, but when they give you their word they’re solidly attached to their word as dried snot on suede.

0:01:18 Debra Schwartz: My God. [laughs]

0:01:18 Larry Lautzker: I own this thing. I bought it. I had to buy it.

0:01:21 Debra Schwartz: Well, I’ll tell you what, that was a pretty good dang intro for you, Larry.

0:00:18 Larry Lautzker: I’d like to think of myself that way, that I’m committed and I wanna make a difference. And if I say I wanna get something done, I get it done.

0:01:36 Debra Schwartz: Yeah, here we are finally and at last.

0:01:39 Larry Lautzker: Yeah.

0:01:39 Debra Schwartz: For those that don’t know your name, I imagine a good portion of them has seen you because you’ve been quite the fixture in the town of Mill Valley for a very long time. You have your business, Famous4 clothing and productions; you’re in the heart of Mill Valley; some could say you are a bit of a heart of Mill Valley.

0:02:01 Larry Lautzker: It's my double entendre for my shop and what I do for the town — what I'm blessed to do — the opportunities I have to give back.

0:02:10 Debra Schwartz: I've got your bio here, several pages that goes way back. You've been part of so much. You've been part of the history of San Francisco, the history of a particular generation — I'm speaking to you for the celebration of the Summer of Love — and so you've played your part, you've been a part of that era and so many after. And here we are in 2017 with still so much going on, and you're right in the heart of it as you have been all along. Before we get going on about your life in particular, I'd love to get a little context about your family. Can you tell me a little bit about your people?

0:03:03 Larry Lautzker: My people? I only go back as far as my grandparents. I don't know about their parents; I didn't spend a lot of time with my father or mother's parents. They were older, my mom and dad were older when they got married and I was born, and I never got to speak much or hang out with either of my grandparents. My father's dad had died before I was born and my grandmother, who was my —

0:03:47 Debra Schwartz: Let's have names while you're talking, if you have them.

0:03:48 Larry "the Hat" Lautzker: Well, Sam, Samuel who was in the Austrian Cavalry, my dad's dad, was born in Poland. All I know about him is he was part of like a horse brigade in the Austrian Cavalry. And my grandmother came over here in 1915, and started the family business which was a restaurant in Brighton Beach in New York. My granddad came over in 1928.

0:04:21 Debra Schwartz: Your grandmother's name?

0:04:22 Larry Lautzker: My grandmother's name was Gussie. Sam and Gussie.

0:04:27 Debra Schwartz: And your father?

0:04:28 Larry Lautzker: Oscar.

0:04:29 Debra Schwartz: Mm-hmm.

0:04:32 Larry Lautzker: Other than that, there's a small child hanging out in the family restaurant with my grandmother. She was loving and kind, but she didn't speak a lot of English and I never spent a lot of time with her. There weren't a lot of big family gatherings. There were family gatherings, but I don't really feel much of a connection to my grandparents and pretty much the same on my mom's side. I don't even remember — oh, Josephine was my grandmother's name on my mom's side, her mother.

0:05:04 Debra Schwartz: Josephine. What's her last name, do you remember?

0:05:06 Larry Lautzker: Well, yeah. My mom's maiden name was Gubelbank. G-U-B-E-L, Gubelbank. Her father David, and they had a business on the next block from my grandmother's restaurant, which later became our family business.

0:05:23 Debra Schwartz: Do you remember the name of the restaurant?

0:05:25 Larry Lautzker: S and G, for Sam and Gussie, right?

0:05:27 Debra Schwartz: Mm-hmm.

0:05:31 Larry Lautzker: That's how my mom and dad met, 'cause her parents used to go in and bring her into the restaurant. My dad was 19, she was 15 when they first met. Yes, not much of a connection or family history, as far as grandparents were —

0:05:50 Debra Schwartz: You've got European descent?

0:05:52 Larry "the Hat" Lautzker: All European descent, although my mom was born in Philadelphia, and my dad was born in Poland and he was educated in Vienna and Austria. Not a lot of family connections. It's interesting 'cause I look around at family trees and people who have big families, and we had a fairly big family. We'd get together on Thanksgiving and things like that, but there was never really a family connection that way. And the cousins are all spread out all over the world at this point, so there's no real connection to family that way.

0:06:31 Debra Schwartz: You were born in the East Coast.

0:00:18 Larry Lautzker: I was born in Brooklyn, yeah.

0:06:34 Debra Schwartz: Brooklyn.

0:06:35 Larry Lautzker: Brooklyn Jewish Hospital. That's pretty Jewish and pretty Brooklyn.

0:06:37 Debra Schwartz: Were you raised with Judaism?

0:06:40 Larry Lautzker: The restaurant was a kosher restaurant and family business, but we were reformed. We weren't orthodox or conservative at all. For me it's interesting, 'cause when people think where you get your values from. When my mom passed away, I told a story about her at her memorial. I said, "I would've liked to have known her as a teenager or as a young woman," and it starts off with that. Her parents got a phone call that she was in jail, that she had been arrested. She was 14 years old and she was arrested for demonstrating for socialism outside of her high school. It was 1932. In 1936, she moved out of the family home and got her own apartment in the West Village and worked her way through City College as a model and a bookkeeper in the fur industry, and her boyfriend was the road manager of Woody Herman's band. Woody

Herman's band was like the Stones of the '30s. And basically she was a vegetarian, she smoked dope, communist. She was a member of the Abraham Lincoln Brigade, my mom.

0:07:56 Debra Schwartz: She was a member of the what?

0:07:57 Larry Lautzker: Abraham Lincoln Brigade, which was the junior communist party in America, and she got put in jail again for demonstrating for socialism when she was 18. She came back to the old neighborhood when she was 29 years old and hooked up with my dad again. They liked to tell a story that when my dad first met her when she was 15 and he said, "I'm gonna marry a woman just like this." He knew already when she was 15 that there was a connection there. So, he wanted to find someone like my mom, and it wound up being my mom 14 years later. And my dad was a pretty amazing athlete and scholar. Oscar and Gertie, Gertie, Gertrude. But an athlete and scholar, he spoke five languages and he was a professor of language out of college, but he couldn't teach 'cause his accent was too strong, and he wound up going in and running the family business, taking over and expanding the family business. He was a typical example for me anyway of a kid that works 60 hours a day after school, got all straight As and found time for sports and enjoying his life. He worked hard all his life, and he instilled in me to be there for other people, stand up for what you believe in. And my mom, the same thing.

0:09:22 Debra Schwartz: They were humanists and independent in thinking.

0:09:25 Larry "the Hat" Lautzker: Yeah. They were liberal, they were bright. They cared about what was going on in the world and about everything. My mom was an athlete and a musician herself, besides being a very capable woman. She definitely thought outside the box, and was very ahead of her time.

0:09:46 Debra Schwartz: Do you have siblings?

0:09:48 Larry Lautzker: I had a twin sister, who passed away when she was 18, who was never really part of my life. She had cerebral palsy at birth. She lived in a home all her life. It's an interesting question that people ask me from time to time, 'cause I don't have an experience of her. There's been times in my life when I've thought about the bumps along the road, the bumps and bruises of my life, and I've thought, "Well, I'm paying for the karma that I created," 'cause when I was born, I was told that I came flying out, and she was stuck in my mom's womb and they had to go in with high forceps and they grabbed her by the head and caused the brain injury, which led to her problems. There's times in my life when I felt I used her as leverage to justify the things that went wrong in my own life. "This is karma."

0:10:40 Debra Schwartz: I think it's survivor's guilt.

0:10:42 Larry Lautzker: Yeah, it's whatever it is. I went through some of that in my life, but she was, for all intents and purposes, a vegetable her whole life. She lived in homes and she died when she was 18. And then I had a sister 10 years younger who's a

doll and who's helped me in my business and her name is Robin. My twin sister was named Lois. It was Lois and Larry.

0:11:07 Debra Schwartz: Lois and Larry.

0:11:08 Larry Lautzker: Lois and Larry.

0:11:13 Debra Schwartz: Does your surviving sister live here in Marin?

0:11:16 Larry Lautzker: No, she's in New York. Robin's in New York and she has two kids that are now in their 30s. In fact, today is one of their birthdays — Roi's. My sister married an Israeli in her first marriage and Roi means "I see." She had an eye problem when she was born, but it has turned out okay. They thought she might lose her sight at birth, but she's fine, and Roi in Hebrew means "I see." Today is Roi's birthday, July 10th.

0:11:43 Debra Schwartz: Happy birthday, Roi.

0:11:44 Larry Lautzker: Happy birthday, Roi. And then there's Liat, who's the older one at 33, and Liat means "of me." That was her first child.

0:11:56 Debra Schwartz: You were born on the East Coast, but we're sitting in the West right now.

0:12:02 Larry Lautzker: Yes we are sitting, definitely sitting, in the West.

0:12:04 Debra Schwartz: How did you migrate over? And what year?

0:12:19 Larry Lautzker: Well, that was August 3rd, 1970 about, so almost 47 years ago. In a few weeks it'll literally be 47. It was August the 3rd, about 8:00 at night on a Sunday night. I hadn't planned on coming to San Francisco. My life had been laid out for me after I had some problems as a teenager and went from doing really well in school to leaving high school and getting my GED and never going to college and going to work on Wall Street. I had connections on Wall Street, and I would have become a stock broker, but somehow it didn't resonate as I was living other people's dreams. And also, it was partially ordered by the courts that I get a job.

0:13:11 Debra Schwartz: I've gotta ask —

0:13:12 Larry Lautzker: No, you don't have to ask. We don't need to go there. I just got in trouble. I was a 15-year-old, really smart criminal, and did some things that I — clearly I was acting out against my parents, 'cause one of the problems growing up with a father who's in the restaurant business is you don't ever see him. The restaurant business is brutal on families, and I didn't like that. I decided when I was two, three years old — I'd already figured it out that my dad, who was — when I was born, he was about 35, and he was much older than any other dads in the neighborhood who were always there with

their kids to play ball and hang out and do everything and my dad was just never there. Even though every minute he had to spend with me, he was an amazing guy and I loved him so dearly, but he wasn't there. So as I got older, I started doing things that weren't consistent with who I was. I was a good kid but underneath — the understanding, being able to intellectualize, I knew he was working hard and providing for us, and we had a nice life — there were feelings, there was pain, there was suffering, that I went through.

0:14:27 Debra Schwartz: You acted out.

0:14:27 Larry “the Hat” Lautzker: I acted out.

0:14:29 Debra Schwartz: So you're on the school bus.

0:14:32 Larry “the Hat” Lautzker: So I'm on the school bus — no, I wasn't gonna be on the school bus. And when I left Wall Street in '68, I moved down to Miami Beach.

0:14:38 Debra Schwartz: Miami.

0:14:39 Larry Lautzker: I started going there with my family. We'd spend a month every year and my dad would shut down — he had a couple of restaurants and catering facilities at the time, catering halls. But he would shut down one of the restaurants 'cause he was a partner with his two brothers as well, so he could take off for a month and we'd go to Miami. Miami was interesting 'cause the first time I ran away, I was one and a half. Not even one and a half, I was about 13 months old. I started walking when I was eight months old. By the time I was a little past one, I was flying around. This is the first time we were in Miami, and we stayed at Lincoln Road and Collins Avenue, which was like the Times Square of Miami Beach. My parents were in a shopping market in a grocery store and I remember clearly — not even running away, just not wanting to be with them, wanting to be on the beach. So I left.

I see myself walking out in my mind's eye. I see myself literally walking out of the grocery store and past the dairy case which had clear plastic on it and I remember what I was wearing and I got about three blocks away, literally to the corner of Lincoln Road and Collins Avenue. And I got stopped by a cop and a little old lady, and the little old lady says, “Little boy, are you lost?” as my parents come flying up behind me completely freaked out. They were ignoring me in the market, obviously. I was able to just walk out. That could have been a portent of things to come, that I wanted to do my own thing and they didn't have very good control over me.

The following year they put me in a little daycare place and they left me there at two o'clock. I could tell time at two. I was a smart kid, and they left me in this daycare place. This is really good. They left me there at 2:00 and at 2:10, I left. After they left, I left. [chuckles] This is how well-supervised I was, and I got caught again crossing Lincoln Road and Collins Avenue. This time they took me to jail 'cause they didn't know where my parents were or anything. My poor parents. They came to get me at 5:00, and the people at the place couldn't find me. I could just imagine the horror that my parents were

going through at that point. They went to the police station. My dad walked in and — once again, this visual record that I have of things — I had been on the second floor of this police department, and they had this up and down staircase. They had just given me an ice-cream cone, a tutti frutti ice-cream cone. My story. The cop brought me down and said to my dad, “Is this your son?” and before my dad could answer I said, “That’s not my daddy. He left me.”

0:17:35 Debra Schwartz: Oh my, you hold a grudge. [chuckles]

0:17:37 Larry “the Hat” Lautzker: Yeah. “That’s not my daddy, he left me.” Like I say, it was the beginning.

0:17:42 Debra Schwartz: You were practicing fledgling ready to fly?

0:17:47 Larry “the Hat” Lautzker: Yeah.

0:17:48 Debra Schwartz: What age were you? What year was it when you came to the Bay Area?

0:17:54 Larry Lautzker: We came in 1970, and like I said in ’68, when I left my planned life on Wall Street, I moved down to Miami, and started working with bands. I had been working with bands in New York the year before, and I was always drawn to the difference that music could make in people’s lives. It was a connection. And plus, my mom was a musician and she taught me to play piano when I was five, so I played a little bit of music myself. I started working with a band in Miami, we went down to play a show in Key West, and I never left. I stayed in Key West for about eight months and it was this very idyllic setting. We had a big commune and the fishermen in the Keys would bring us fresh fish every day, and there was a commercial kitchen in this big place that we had, and we’d cook for 100, 150 people a night. Every night was a scene and a party, and it was where I met some people, who had come through there, who lived in a commune in San Francisco, the Good Earth Commune.

0:18:50 Debra Schwartz: I’ve heard stories of you in the commune life from David Talbot’s book *the Season of the Witch* in which you’re featured and that talks about your commune.

0:19:02 Larry Lautzker: Well, that was the commune, the Good Earth, it was the biggest commune ever in San Francisco, and as it says in the book that we saved the Haight-Ashbury, not only stopping Alioto and the federal government under this, what I call this, this scam called “redevelopment.” We also stopped the crime that was going on, the drugs that were being brought in, and there were some serious times.

0:19:30 Debra Schwartz: Let’s talk about that a little bit. Now it’s 1970, you’ve come to the Bay Area, you’re interested in music, and you’re involved with bands. You’re pursuing your own interests rather than living out someone else’s wishes for your life. And you’re far, far, far from the beach and the police station and all of the places that

they were initially looking for you — would find you, but now you're way far away, and you're living a different life. Now in 1970, this was right after the Summer of Love. Tell me a little bit about the scene you were living in then, the commune, what it was like, some of the people you knew.

0:20:11 Larry “the Hat” Lautzker: The bus story is interesting 'cause we started off with six people on the bus. I hadn't planned to come to San Francisco. Some friends of mine came together and asked me to help them find and build what was the equivalent of a mobile home with an old school bus. And we bought a '57 Chevy school bus from a Boy Scout troop on Long Island and outfitted it with bunks and stoves and turned it into a very livable situation. We started out as six people and a lot of LSD, driving across Canada.

0:20:50 Debra Schwartz: Where were you getting that LSD? On the East Coast?

0:20:52 Larry Lautzker: I can't really remember. I can't tell you names. [chuckles]

0:20:55 Debra Schwartz: Okay. What kind of LSD was it? Do you remember?

0:20:57 Larry Lautzker: Really good LSD. If any of the listeners know about Ken Kesey and the Merry Pranksters, we wound up being the Merry Pranksters of Canada. We were musicians, we were dressed out in outrageous stuff, and everywhere we went, we had many trips, and we got a lot of people high.

0:21:15 Debra Schwartz: You're on a bus going from place to place pollinating LSD?

0:21:20 Larry Lautzker: Yeah.

0:21:21 Debra Schwartz: Okay, gotcha.

0:21:23 Larry Lautzker: We're pollinating, thinking outside the box, stretching the doors of perception. It's one of the things that I read on the bus — I read Tom Wolfe's book *Electric Kool-Aid Acid Test*, and in that book they refer to Ken Kesey's book shelf, which had *The Doors of Perception* by Aldous Huxley, and the LSD experiences of Timothy Leary, and several other books. I read all those books along the way and lived that life that Kesey lived, and it was an extraordinary time.

0:21:58 Debra Schwartz: How did it feel to be in a bus reading all these books that are opening windows to other ways, and you're with all these people, probably very different from who you grew up with?

0:22:12 Larry Lautzker: Well, first of all, the six of us, the five other guys, we were all childhood friends, guys I knew for a long time.

0:22:17 Debra Schwartz: Oh, that's interesting.

0:22:19 Larry Lautzker: Yeah. And along the way, we picked up another 15 people that lived on the bus, so we were 21 on the bus, and then we ran into some other friends of ours who were from Brooklyn and who had a little Chevy panel truck. So there were 28 of us. And every day was an adventure. Whether we went through a campground — there are amazing stories. We met a guy who was a student from Cornell in Banff and he said, “Come to our parents’ house.” He convinced us to go, and we wound up being guests of the Calgary Stampede and some other big festival, and we played music. The first night we got there, he invited a bunch of his friends over to his parents’ house. Now, his parents were gone, and he said, “My parents are gone, they’ll be cool with this.” And we got to this house, and I was kind of the spokesman for the group, and we got to this sprawling mansion and I said, “What does your father do?” And he says, “Oh, he’s the Chief Magistrate of Alberta.” Like the head of the Supreme Court, the number one lawmaker in Canada.

0:23:21 Debra Schwartz: And here you come with a — [chuckles]

0:23:22 Larry Lautzker: I wound up talking to the guy’s father on the phone and he said, “I love what you guys do. We’re liberal here in Canada.” They were so easygoing. “You can eat all the food, just don’t break anything in the house.” The guy was lovely. And the first night we got there, we had this big acid festival with our 28 people and about 30 of their friends, and it was this amazing party. I had just got done reading Arthur Clarke’s book called *Childhood’s End* where tubes of light come out of the sky and children are sucked into the tubes and the earth explodes and the adults are gone, and wherever the children have gone to — anyway, we’re laying there, we were really high, kind of ‘melting into the ground high’ and the Northern Lights come out, which was a very interesting experience ’cause here come these beams of light and it’s like I had literally the day before finished reading it.

0:24:12 Debra Schwartz: It could leave an impression.

0:24:13 Larry “the Hat” Lautzker: But every day were moments like that, meeting new people and having just wonderful, wonderful times. It was a great adventure. And in real time, I can look back now, look back on the history of my life, and say that my everyday has been filled with adventures like that, ’cause it’s always been very uncharted territory. It’s not the cookie-cutter life. Originally, I thought in my education I was gonna be either a mechanical engineer — I had an aptitude for engineering — or something along those lines. I never wanted to be in the family business ’cause I saw what it did to my experience with my family — just that restaurants were hard. But I had no plan ’cause at the last minute I wasn’t gonna be part of the bus ride and the last minute they said, “Well, you’ve helped us put it together and build it, would you like to come with us?”

0:25:10 Debra Schwartz: Sounds like the plan was no plan.

0:25:12 Larry Lautzker: There was no plan. I didn’t have a plan to come out here. I had just met people on the Keys who lived in this commune and they said, “If you ever

come to San Francisco — we love the commune you're a part of Key West — come to our commune." Now we're arriving at the commune.

0:25:28 Debra Schwartz: You arrived at the commune in San Francisco?

0:25:30 Larry Lautzker: Yeah. And I knock on the door and said, "I'm here and I brought some friends." Now the Good Earth had 19 houses and with 300 people who were members. We had our own newspaper and we communicated with all the houses through the newspaper. And during the summer months — especially in the early '70s, when all the transients were coming, college kids, whatever, would come — the population of the commune would almost double. Every house had enough rooms where people could just roll out their sleeping bags.

0:26:06 Debra Schwartz: The houses, when you talk about the houses, are they clustered together in the neighborhood or are they here and there?

0:26:11 Larry Lautzker: No, we were all over the Haight. We had 19 houses from Masonic to Parnassus —

0:26:18 Debra Schwartz: And these were rentals? You were renting?

0:26:20 Larry Lautzker: We rented all these houses. To say we were ahead of our time — we had the first ever recycling center in San Francisco. We had a big building on Haight Street that we rented, the Free Store, so we gave away free clothing, and we fed people out of that place and eventually we started a recycling center where we were bringing 15 tons of glass to Corning in the East Bay. It was a thriving recycling business.

0:26:48 Debra Schwartz: And the funds that you generated to pay for the rentals, did that come from your selling of the asset?

0:26:58 Larry Lautzker: That came from the selling of weed, cocaine, LSD, the recycling center, any number of — we were self-contained. We established the food co-op that exists to this day, and we had art galleries, a mechanic shop. We had free breakfast programs for children whose parents couldn't feed them. We took them to school. We were involved in so many things. We had our own band. We produced shows. We produced the first shows, and I produced the first show in Golden Gate Park, after the Summer of Love; it was a McGovern benefit. And so we did that for several years, all the shows that happened in Golden Gate Park were our shows.

We ran Tony Serra's mayoral campaign in 1971. That's why Tony is in the chapter in the *Season of the Witch* book. We were politically involved, we were fighting the fight to save the Haight and at the same time living a socialistic life. And there were four or five people who ran different aspects of the commune — someone in charge of the food co-op program, someone in charge of the recycling center, someone in charge of finance, that was one of my jobs. And we would have family meetings and we would throw the I

Ching and we would consult the I Ching and make very democratic decisions. No one ruled, and it worked. It worked.

0:28:50 Debra Schwartz: And you're how old now?

0:28:51 Larry Lautzker: I am 69 years old.

0:28:52 Debra Schwartz: No, I mean at this time.

0:28:53 Larry Lautzker: Oh, at that time? How old then? I got here when I was 22.

0:29:00 Debra Schwartz: You were in your early 20s and you were living this alternate life. At any point, did you feel like in your own way you were carrying on your family tradition of activism and —

0:29:12 Larry Lautzker: No, 'cause it was such a whirlwind lifestyle, especially in the Haight, because we were under attack. We were really under attack. From the day that I got there it was already going on.

0:29:29 Debra Schwartz: Explain that, please.

0:29:30 Larry Lautzker: Well, the Western Addition had been demolished and the powers that be were moving in on the Haight and they were bringing in crime and drugs and —

0:29:41 Debra Schwartz: You mean besides the drugs you guys had?

0:29:43 Larry Lautzker: Well, we like to think that the drugs we were selling were doing people good. We weren't bringing in heroin and we weren't trying to bring people down. Our whole thing was bringing people up. Our whole focus was bringing people up, and we were reeling — we were kids that came from the Cold War. We were protesting the war on Vietnam. It was a difficult time.

0:30:13 Debra Schwartz: What about the war in Vietnam? Some of you must have —

0:30:18 Larry Lautzker: We had people who were members of the commune who were in Vietnam, who bore the scars of being in Vietnam, who came to the commune and healed because they came into a loving environment where they were accepted, where they weren't — we didn't turn our backs on them. We embraced them. They wound up being great fighters, if you will, 'cause when we started coming under attack by the city, we were literally under attack. We were armed. They would shoot at us, the police. We were under siege, literally under siege, and we turned the main part of the compound, which were three houses on Cole, Oak, and Page Street where the main body of the family lived, where the leaders of the family lived, although we were starting to move to different places so they didn't know where the leaders were. And so we had people that

could handle the strategy of that, green berets from the army, and then people who would train to combat what was going on because they came after us big time.

0:31:49 Debra Schwartz: When you said, “They came after us,” they came after you because they considered you what? A bad element? Because they wanted to reformat the city and you were —

0:31:57 Larry Lautzker: We were a threat to the monetary gains that they had planned. If you look around the United States, this thing that, under the auspices of redevelopment, the scandal that redevelopment is — I don’t know if there’s a city in America that hasn’t uncovered the truth behind redevelopment. And how the big power brokers in the various cities and the construction companies and whoever’s behind all that, how they run down property values, create crime in communities and then buy up huge blocks of land and make huge amounts of money. That’s what was going down on the Haight-Ashbury.

0:32:38 Debra Schwartz: We have a lot to cover, too, so I can’t stay as much as I’d like to and get more details. I’m glad to get a little of this in order to get the ambience of it. I would like to ask you, you present a pretty amazing description of some pretty, for very young, pretty organized and cooperative people. What were the downsides for you?

0:33:11 Larry Lautzker: I don’t know that we ever looked at downsides. In retrospect, I don’t see any downsides when I look at it to this day. We all were very open to what was happening, to what was going on in those times, which goes to everything from free love — and there was open loving going on in the commune and people there had multiple partners. If you wanted to be monogamous, people respected that. And there was people who just — we loved each other. We were people who were very connected to one another. We came together behind some very common causes. We shared a belief. And we were living an idyllic life in so much as we were making a difference. We were making a difference in our community and everyone was pretty much on the same page. That’s not to say there weren’t jealousies that went on, but it was learning on the job. We were really learning how to live and be together, but we had a common goal, Church of the Good Earth. We wanted to make a difference. We wanted the earth to be a better place. We wanted people to learn, to love and be together.

0:34:38 Debra Schwartz: You were growing up together?

0:34:39 Larry Lautzker: Yeah.

0:34:41 Debra Schwartz: Okay so you lived there for a good long while. You were successful in stopping the destruction or the tearing down of many of the beautiful old Victorians there.

0:34:53 Larry Lautzker: The entire neighborhood would’ve been flattened.

0:34:56 Debra Schwartz: Would have been flattened, yes, and it wasn’t.

0:34:58 Larry Lautzker: And it wasn't.

0:35:00 Debra Schwartz: Thank you.

0:35:00 Larry Lautzker: Still there.

0:35:00 Debra Schwartz: Thank you very much.

0:35:01 Larry Lautzker: Yeah, it's good. I could start crying now. [chuckles]

0:35:05 Debra Schwartz: I'd like to thank your family for all your good work.

0:35:07 Larry Lautzker: Yeah, exactly. "I'd like to thank my mom and dad for this award, thank you very much, couldn't have done it without them. Thank God."

0:35:14 Debra Schwartz: Before we step away from the Haight district, are you still friends with a lot of your family from that time?

0:35:23 Larry Lautzker: There are members of the commune who I'm in contact with still and they're all the most extraordinary people who've gone on to do extraordinary things with their lives, larger than life contributions to —

0:35:44 Debra Schwartz: Would you like to say some names? Anybody that we know?

0:35:47 Larry Lautzker: No, names aren't so important 'cause we were all known by our sun signs — I was Aquarius Larry — so names wouldn't matter and no one cared about last names. Even though I know some last names at this point in my life, then no one ever paid attention.

0:36:02 Debra Schwartz: Well, we'll take it as the time that it was and leave them as —

0:36:05 Larry Lautzker: There was a 15-year-old runaway, who had her first child at maybe 18 years old in the commune. And I didn't see her for 30-plus years. In 2003, we had a 30-year reunion. We played naked softball. It wasn't the same as playing [laughs] as when we were 30 years old. Interesting. There's a Good Earth Playboy issue that we did, if you will.

0:36:38 Debra Schwartz: Oh really? Do you have that still?

0:36:40 Larry Lautzker: I am the keeper of the archives.

0:36:41 Debra Schwartz: I have to see that.

0:36:42 Larry Lautzker: “I have to see that.” Yes. [laughs] There’s some interesting pictures in there. But I hadn’t seen — Virgo Reggie her name was. She was a little thing, but she wound up being a nationally ranked bodybuilder when I saw her 30 years later. She was 48 or 49 years old at this point, and her family was there, she had three kids. She had her 29-year-old, 30-year-old daughter there with her, her children, and so we got to see some generations. But Reggie wound up being one of the heads of the Oregon Forestry Service. They all lived in Eugene, they had moved up. And when the family was eventually broken up by the police department, and they just made it unbearable for us to be in the Haight, even though that’s our legacy, that the Haight’s still there. She wound up being a major player in the Oregon Forestry Service. But interestingly enough, when 9/11 happened, she led the entire state of Oregon crew of people that went to help the first responders at 9/11. And she later went back to New York and became this computer expert and taught the entire New York City Police Department first response computer systems and set up their whole system.

0:38:10 Debra Schwartz: Wow, impressive.

0:38:11 Larry Lautzker: She went from being a 15-year-old runaway to being this — there’s stories like that.

0:38:14 Debra Schwartz: Goes from 15-year-old runaway to adult running things.

0:38:19 Larry Lautzker: Running things and being an amazing woman. And her kids were great. And yeah, the reunion, it was pretty amazing.

0:38:26 Debra Schwartz: Now you’re leaving — ’cause we need to keep moving here — you’re leaving the Haight, things finally get too gritty and —

0:38:34 Larry Lautzker: I was moved out of the Haight into a secret location [chuckles] with the cash and the stash, so to speak, ’cause we were friends with people in the police department.

[pause in the recording]

0:38:49 Debra Schwartz: We are back, we had a little break there for a moment. It’s quiet in the room again. But you were saying you were —

0:38:57 Larry Lautzker: I moved out of the compound with the cash and the stash. We had friends in the police department who knew what was gonna be coming down, so I had to be moved out with the cash and the stash. I can’t tell you the date, but a few months after the — literally, the federal government denied the grants, the money that was part of the deal to demolish the Haight. When that deal got crushed, it wasn’t more than a few weeks later that at about 5:30 in the morning, 150 attack squad cops lined up out in the panhandle and came through and kicked in 14 doors between Oak, Cole, and Page Streets and arrested 114 people, just kicked in the doors like the Gestapo coming in and the Jews in Poland or something. Just swept people away. And 97 people were our

people, the other people they just randomly put in jail and then released. I had to bail out 97 people, out of jail. And since we knew it was coming, they found what literally amounted to people's personal stashes of, literally, a quarter of an ounce of weed per person. And front page Chronicle story was "The Church of the Good Earth claims that weed found in raid was something we use for religious purposes." It was a sacrament, if you will. [chuckles] So we were the first people to take that stand.

0:40:39 Debra Schwartz: Were you getting legal advice?

0:00:18 Larry Lautzker: Huh? Well, Tony Serra was our attorney, so we had one of the top lawyers in San Francisco. We were friends with all the dope lawyers like Michael Stepanian. And we were friends with the Hallinans, people who were wonderful fighters for the rights of people. The Hallinans are legendary, Tony, they're all legendary attorneys for the people. Their history is as rich as San Francisco. Wonderful, wonderful people.

0:41:10 Debra Schwartz: Again for those listening, David Talbot's *Season of the Witch* chronicles all of this.

0:41:15 Larry Lautzker: All of it.

0:41:16 Debra Schwartz: Yes.

0:41:17 Larry Lautzker: Yeah, a wonderful book, amazing book.

0:41:18 Debra Schwartz: Yep. Wonderful interview too. He's interviewed here with the Historical Society.

0:41:22 Larry Lautzker: Yeah.

0:41:24 Debra Schwartz: You are with the "stash and the cash" —

0:41:27 Larry Lautzker: I'm with the stash and the cash and I'm living in a non-disclosed location. [chuckles]

0:41:33 Debra Schwartz: A safe house.

0:41:34 Larry Lautzker: A safe house, if you will. And for all intent and purposes, our role in the community — we had done what we were there to do. Who knew? But we were there to do the work we do. And when they busted the 97 people, as a unit we couldn't continue. We couldn't. The scrutiny, the light that we had drawn to ourselves, we couldn't do what we did, and we couldn't afford to support my end of it, anyway.

0:42:11 Debra Schwartz: You had a systems collapse.

0:42:13 Larry Lautzker: Yeah, and the commune continued for several more years, but our role, and some other people who were the original people who couldn't be seen or heard from really — we all disappeared.

0:42:32 Debra Schwartz: May I ask, when you say "Couldn't be seen or heard from"?

0:42:36 Larry Lautzker: There were people after us.

0:42:37 Debra Schwartz: And those people, you believe, were the police people? There weren't others, just —

0:42:42 Larry Lautzker: Well, it was the power brokers in San Francisco. The police are just pawns of the power brokers. We were on a hit list, if you will. The whole family was on a hit list. And then there were those of us who were more vocal, more visible than others, who were on the top of the list.

0:43:04 Debra Schwartz: When you say hit list, do you mean in the true sense like "go to sleep with fishes"?

0:43:08 Larry Lautzker: No, just — I can tell you that I was in the Hall of Justice before this all went down, six months before it went down. And two of them were decorated officers, well-known officers in San Francisco, I won't mention names. I ran to them literally in the hallway and they said to me point blank, "We would love to find you sometime, catch you in an alley sometime, and beat you up."

0:43:43 Debra Schwartz: Oh, okay, thuggery.

0:43:45 Larry Lautzker: And my answer to that — as much as we were peace and love and hippies, we were also very radical — my answer to that was, "If you ever caught me alone in an alleyway, I'd blow your fuckin' heads off. Peace, bro." It was that kind of interaction with the cops. And that was all because of our resisting the takeover of the community, the destruction of what was one of the most iconic places on the planet.

0:44:14 Debra Schwartz: I recall the news reports at the time, and the newspapers talked about the unsavory influences and degradation of the quality of the city, the invasion of youth, and ironically you have the same stance, but against others. There's a bit of a war going on within the city. You see them as the destructive force, the developers coming in to — did you ever feel that your opinions, your perspective were presented in the media in a fair manner? There's the *Rolling Stone*, there's a lot of alternate newspapers —

0:45:03 Larry Lautzker: So much of it, like I said, when you're in battle, when you're on the frontlines, which we were — in retrospect, we had a lot of support when we went up against them, thousands of people showed up to the rallies we had to stop them from destroying the Haight.

0:45:22 Debra Schwartz: We're gonna pause for a moment. There may be a couple of stops during this interview because we're actually sitting in Vasco's bar, the restaurant, right now. Larry and I are sitting together right at the intersection of Miller and Throckmorton looking at Mill Valley. We're sitting in an empty restaurant but there are interruptions. Somehow, though, it seems like a fitting setting to interview you in, Larry, so we'll just have to deal with these interruptions as they come.

0:45:53 Larry Lautzker: These little interruptions, yeah.

0:45:58 Debra Schwartz: So there was support for you then.

0:46:00 Larry Lautzker: There was definitely support in the community. And we had our friends, we had our friends in City Hall. You think of San Francisco, the city of love, and how it opened its arms to people from all different walks of life, and we lived that. That was our dream to live and love and make a difference on the planet. And we were a force to be reckoned with. There were people who obviously — we thwarted their greed, their program, and we won. And like I say, it's our legacy.

0:46:48 Debra Schwartz: Let's leave Haight-Ashbury district behind, safely snug in history and the culture that still seems to thrive there, with some of the effects that you perpetuated — the recycling center, the free clinic, all these things still active.

0:47:10 Larry Lautzker: Yeah, the free clinic. Yeah. We had people that were major players in the free clinic. We had a family band, we had this wonderful band and we played a lot of benefits, and raised money for all kinds of things, the free clinic being a part of that.

0:47:22 Debra Schwartz: And there was a lot of rock and roll musicians living there, a lot of amazing bands. There was Jefferson Airplane, there was the Grateful Dead.

0:48:18 Larry Lautzker: Yeah. We had the Good Earth Painting Company, and the Jefferson Airplane's mansion on Fulton Street, we painted their house, which was just a wonderful place. I think we had a company that did every job you could do, from plumbers, to painters, to auto mechanics. When I say we were self-contained, we really were. It was an amazing thing.

0:47:56 Debra Schwartz: Okay. So, then, you leave, you're in a safe house, and let's fast forward and keep this moving along. Tell me as briefly as you can how you came to Mill Valley.

0:48:10 Larry Lautzker: It's kind of fuzzy in a way, because I wound up leaving the city and moving to Sausalito. And at the same time, I had been working in the music business. Besides my other roles in the commune, I was also the manager of the Good Earth family band. And we had done shows with the Dead. I met all those people. And a guy that lived around the corner from the commune, a guy named Ken Beales, he was a booking agent and he worked with a man named Sam Cutler. And Sam and Ken ran what

was called Out of Town Tours, which was the Grateful Dead's booking agency. And Ken and I, in the middle of late '73 or early '74 — Sam decided to go back to London. Sam had been the road manager of The Rolling Stones, and with Altamont, he decided to go back to London where he was raised and shut down the agency.

Well, Ken and I decided to inherit the Grateful Dead's booking agency. And we were living in Sausalito, we shared a house in Sausalito, but we rented an office in Mill Valley, and set up what was called Joy Us Musical Services, which essentially was the roster of the Grateful Dead's booking agency, which was pretty much every local well-known rock and roll band in the Bay Area. And Joy Us was the name, the joy in us, the joy in the music, the joy in coming together and creating something. That was my first foray, if you will, into Mill Valley. We were ill-equipped to run it, because there were other things going on in our lives, and we never made it as an agency. That lasted for about a year or a year-and-a-half in Mill Valley. I still continue to manage bands and book bands. But it just didn't work, it didn't work very well, and we didn't get along as partners, so we moved on to different things.

0:50:25 Debra Schwartz: What year is this?

0:50:26 Larry Lautzker: This is '74, '75.

0:50:28 Debra Schwartz: You were in the Haight for four, five years?

0:50:30 Larry Lautzker: About three and a half years.

0:50:31 Debra Schwartz: Three and a half years, okay. Now you're here, and you're still living in Sausalito.

0:50:38 Larry Lautzker: Still living in Sausalito and working in Mill Valley. But when the agency stopped happening, I continued to work with bands and book local bands on my own, and supplement my income with other nefarious means, by other means. And I wound up moving to Fairfax. I lived in Fairfax, and continued to do that, again work with bands. In 1980, I had an opportunity to lease the Phoenix Theater in Petaluma, 1000-seat theater, and then I started producing big shows — it was 1000 seats — and we worked with every band that you could've possibly imagined, every one of the B.G.P. [Bill Graham Presents] acts. Bill Graham used to come hang out at our place.

We did shows with Santana and Van Morrison — all the bands that Bill managed. We were far enough outside of the city that they could do all their warm up shows before they went on tour. We worked with every band from B.B. King to Hall & Oates, to country shows because it was Petaluma, to Jerry Garcia Band, and Devo, and The Ramones. And we had a wonderful run for three years, but that came to an end. And along the way, I was working with a local band called Tasmanian Devils, and we had a recording studio in San Rafael, a big warehouse, which eventually led to me creating a music scene and clothing shop inside the warehouse. My sister had five clothing stores in New York, and she got me started doing clothing.

0:52:16 Debra Schwartz: Your first clothing store was in San Rafael?

0:52:19 Larry Lautzker: It was in San Rafael in the warehouse, and what was called the Ice House, which is to this day a wonderful music school and recording studio. It was literally a 1910 ice house that David Crosby and Buddy Miles and all these famous musicians actually used to rehearse and hang out there. It has some rich history. But I turned part of the warehouse into a little clothing store that was open on Friday nights and Saturday nights. And bands that I managed that were recording, would come in and we'd have parties after the clubs closed down. We had some pretty wild scenes and some interesting sales at 2:00 and 3:00 in the morning.

0:52:53 Debra Schwartz: Yeah, I can imagine.

0:52:54 Larry Lautzker: Drugs were involved.

0:52:55 Debra Schwartz: Yes, a lot of drugs at that time in the county.

0:52:58 Larry Lautzker: There was a lot of that, definitely permeating the story.

0:53:01 Debra Schwartz: Yes.

0:53:03 Larry Lautzker: I wanted out of the sex, drug, and rock 'n' roll world that I was definitely very immersed in, especially the drug part. The clothing was my way out, and I started that in December of '86. I had some friends who were impressed with my little operation, my clothing operation, who in '89 approached me and said, "We know the space becoming available in Mill Valley. We'd like to partner up with you. Would you like to move?" At that point, the Ice House was no longer, 'cause the people in the area didn't like the scene that we had created there, and I had moved to Miracle Mile, which wasn't great. The opportunity to move to Mill Valley was great, so I literally moved the whole operation to a regular retail operation in Mill Valley.

0:53:55 Debra Schwartz: Right here?

0:53:56 Larry Lautzker: No, not here, on East Blithedale.

[pause in the recording]

0:54:00 Debra Schwartz: We are back. We had to move our venue. It was a little too noisy. And now we've gone from Vasco's restaurant to the library. I think this is so fitting for a guy that started walking from place to place at a very young age and continued to move from place to place throughout your life. And now we moved this interview from place to place.

0:54:26 Larry Lautzker: It's curious, though. I stay where I am for a while. Once I go some place I'm pretty well-planted. I've been planted in Mill Valley this time around

since '89 when I opened up my first store in town on East Blithedale. That was the beginning of this chapter, this long chapter.

0:54:53 Debra Schwartz: Let's get to this chapter. In Mill Valley, for many people, you are a permanent fixture, but you did just come in 1990.

0:55:02 Larry Lautzker: '89.

0:55:03 Debra Schwartz: '89. But your present location, which is —

0:55:10 Larry Lautzker: 96 Throckmorton, right in the heart of Mill Valley, right in the center of downtown, right next to Peet's Coffee.

0:55:15 Debra Schwartz: Mm-hmm.

0:55:18 Larry Lautzker: But in '89, it's interesting — we opened up in '89, what was next to the Avenue Grill, Joe Leis's place, Joe's Taco Lounge. And it didn't take me long to get involved in what was going on in town. It was either Christmas of '89 or '90 when — it didn't take long — this is where the unrest in my life comes in. I've never been a status quo person. I need to move things along. It didn't take long to figure out that the Chamber of Commerce in Mill Valley wasn't very effective, through no fault of their own 'cause there has always been wonderful people working at the Chamber, but Mill Valley unlike every other town in Marin County doesn't finance the Chamber. And so the Chamber fend for itself, putting on events to raise money so they can exist, but they don't really have the budget to promote the downtown. And so I took it upon myself to establish what I like to use the word “vigilante” Chamber and I went around to every business in town and collected money and put the first banner across East Blithedale for the holidays that said, “Think globally. Shop locally.”

0:56:38 Debra Schwartz: Mm-hmm.

0:56:38 Larry Lautzker: That was a phrase I borrowed from Fairfax, but they hadn't used it for a long time. And that became probably a 15-year run of just taking care of the local businesses and lighting all the Christmas trees, all the trees in town for the holidays, and doing the campaign that represented the merchants so we could compete with the surrounding areas. That started from that first shop. In '92, Joe Leis and I — the parade wasn't very exciting —

0:57:17 Debra Schwartz: Which parade?

0:57:18 Larry Lautzker: The Mill Valley Memorial Day Parade. So Joe Leis and I started this new tradition of the parade. And where the parade had about 20 participants, we had 104 floats and we had — Jerry Garcia and Mimi Farina, who started Bread & Roses, were some of the judges. We had 200 dogs in the parade, we had big dogs, little dogs, best-dressed dog. The best-dressed dog that won that first year was an English

Bulldog that was wearing a pink tutu, and that couldn't walk the parade, so was being wheeled in a radio flyer wagon.

0:57:50 Debra Schwartz: Well, they are robust.

0:57:51 Larry Lautzker: Yeah, they are robust [chuckles] and very athletic. That was the year that we also established the Fashion Police. The Fashion Police: we take care of the children, we protect the children of Mill Valley from bad fashion in town.

0:58:07 Debra Schwartz: Yes, I've been cited. Many of us have.

0:58:10 Larry Lautzker: Well, people don't understand the dos and don'ts of good fashion or dressing for success or how recklessly-coordinated people could affect children's eyesight and fashion sense — temporary color blindness, fashion dysfunction can leave scars that they carry well into adulthood.

0:58:26 Debra Schwartz: I mean, these are some of the citations.

0:58:28 Larry Lautzker: These are some of the citations. We take it very, very seriously.

0:58:31 Debra Schwartz: For those that haven't seen the Fashion Police, these are the scary individuals going around on bikes mostly as I recall.

0:58:38 Larry Lautzker: Well, we started off on little gas scooters, then we grew into being politically correct and we have electric scooters and electric bikes now.

0:58:47 Debra Schwartz: They're those individuals, those arbiters of good taste, that go up and down along the parade lines and cite those that are inappropriately dressed one way or another.

0:59:00 Larry Lautzker: We have to sometimes ask people to step behind the appropriately-dressed people so when the children come by, they're not permanently affected or have an episode.

0:59:11 Debra Schwartz: And not scarred by that poor taste?

0:59:13 Larry Lautzker: Yeah, exactly. And we've been doing it for 25 years now. We don't just do the parade. We've been hired. We've been in events all over the Bay Area. We've been on television doing it as well.

0:59:27 Debra Schwartz: Well, I just have to make a comment here, some of the Fashion Police have really overdone the spandex, I think. Isn't that a cite?

0:59:36 Larry Lautzker: Well, one of the tickets is being inappropriately dressed for body type. There are people who shouldn't be wearing spandex, but there's also people

who really look good but they don't dress in a flattering fashion, either, and we'll give them a ticket for it. It's not just a simple spandex thing.

0:59:52 Debra Schwartz: Not utilizing your natural asset.

0:59:54 Larry Lautzker: Yeah, or hiding behind, just dressing in a way that's not flattering.

1:00:00 Debra Schwartz: Is there a muumuu citation?

1:00:03 Larry Lautzker: A muumuu citation would probably be inappropriate. Well, it could be inappropriate dress for body type, which isn't just spandex, which everyone thinks is not very flattering. But ultimately, what we really try and teach people, or the message we're carrying, besides protecting and serving the children of Mill Valley, is that life in general is — your wellbeing starts off as an inside job. It doesn't really matter what you're wearing, we really want to instill in people that, "Work on your spirit, work on your wellbeing and whatever you wear you'll shine." That's really the key to what we do.

1:00:43 Debra Schwartz: It doesn't always feel like that when you're getting a citation, Larry.

1:00:46 Larry Lautzker: Well, yes, but in basic Buddhist tenet is that you have to suffer to grow. [chuckles]

1:00:51 Debra Schwartz: I'm trying not to laugh here. [laughs]

1:00:53 Larry Lautzker: Okay, well I'm sorry, but what we —

1:00:55 Debra Schwartz: I mean just the idea [laughs] that you're the Fashion Police is — these angels of mercy to save — [laughs]

1:01:04 Larry Lautzker: Well, a change into growth. It's really what it's all about.

1:01:10 Debra Schwartz: It's funny is what it is. It's very, very entertaining.

1:01:13 Larry Lautzker: For me, in the context of my life, it's just another extension of how can I contribute to people. [chuckles] I'm the commissioner of the Fashion Police and I train people. We have sessions where we get to sit down, and we go through the jargon, if you will, things like, "Could you please step away from the appropriately-dressed people? [chuckles] Was the power off in your house this morning? Did you get dressed in the dark? Do you and your significant other ever discuss about what you're gonna wear when you go out? Because I'm sorry, we have to separate you now because you're a recklessly-coordinated couple so you have to stand at least 10 feet apart." There's jargon —

1:01:52 Debra Schwartz: Tough love here.

1:01:53 Larry Lautzker: Tough love here, yeah. It's all about the kids.

1:01:55 Debra Schwartz: It's all about the kids. [chuckles]

1:01:57 Larry Lautzker: We've been honored to serve the children of the city of Mill Valley for 25 years, and I'd like to think that every year it gets a little bit better and people are showing up and feeling better about themselves and the way they dress. And in the long run it will contribute to the wellbeing of their entire family.

1:02:15 Debra Schwartz: I have to ask you a tough question, have you ever had to cite a child?

1:02:19 Larry Lautzker: Yes, but none of it's bad. First of all, whether it's reckless coordinating or dressing to incite parental disturbance or a bad hair day, they're pretty common violations, no different than speeding or failure to yield, or anything like that. But we do have a ticket on there that says, "You're fabulous, you look marvelous." 'Cause there's people who really take pride in the way they look, especially on the holidays 'cause nationalism used to be something that mattered. And so we'll give the people from The Redwoods, the elderly, the "Blue Hair" as we call them, we'll give them tickets for looking good. And several of the kids, too, whose parents take pride in dressing their kids up 'cause it's a holiday, and they instill the values of a Memorial Day or a July 4th.

1:03:09 Debra Schwartz: Well, now blue hair is going to take on a new meaning because blue hair is actually something lots of people are wearing now. Or purple.

1:03:16 Larry Lautzker: Blue and purple and pink.

1:03:18 Debra Schwartz: Pink.

1:03:18 Larry Lautzker: Yeah. [chuckles]

1:03:21 Debra Schwartz: Including the elderly, I've noticed.

1:03:23 Larry Lautzker: Including the elderly.

1:03:25 Debra Schwartz: Well, thank you for your service. I'd just like to say on behalf of the city and the Historical Society, we appreciate your concern and your —

1:03:33 Larry Lautzker: I'm grateful. The underpinning of all this is being of service. My clothing store — we actually have a mission statement, and it goes like, "When you wear something from my shop it should forward you in your life." And it summarizes who I am in my life.

1:03:58 Debra Schwartz: Let's talk a little bit more about that as we step away, begrudgingly, from the antics of your —

1:04:06 Larry Lautzker: Fashion Police

1:04:06 Debra Schwartz: Fashion Police, which [chuckles] I'm gonna just say is —

1:04:10 Larry Lautzker: I haven't even shared with you how we've been put in harm's way over the years.

1:04:17 Debra Schwartz: Seriously?

1:04:17 Larry Lautzker: Well, not everyone appreciates us.

1:04:20 Debra Schwartz: No kidding?

1:04:21 Larry Lautzker: Not everyone gets it.

1:04:23 Debra Schwartz: "I can't imagine," she says with an ironic tone.

1:04:26 Larry Lautzker: Yes, exactly. [laughs]

1:04:29 Debra Schwartz: Well, it is hard for people in the force, wherever you live, there's always going to be that pushback. But I have enjoyed the outfits over the years and the helmets, and that very authoritative attitude that they clearly represent when you get cited.

1:04:48 Larry Lautzker: We have a job to do. [chuckles]

1:04:51 Debra Schwartz: You have other jobs you do. It seems to me, and correct me if I'm wrong, but so many of the really fun hometown things that take place in Mill Valley — when the Plaza's closed off, and there's music or there's comedy, or there's a street event, or there's a sidewalk this or that, I could go on and on — and the Memorial Day parade, I believe you were the announcer this year —

1:05:20 Larry Lautzker: No, no, no, no, no, no. I can't go like this! So in '92 we established the I Love A Parade committee. And the I Love A Parade committee is the governing body behind the Memorial Day parade. I'm the head of the I Love A Parade committee. I, along with Paul Moe and Cliff Waldeck, and a few other people around town produced the event. I'm the head honcho, if you will, so I run the parade.

1:05:50 Debra Schwartz: And Joe, had he been alive still —

1:05:52 Larry Lautzker: Joe did it for one year and set the tone. He did it for just the one year.

1:06:00 Debra Schwartz: And for those that don't know Joe, he owned the Avenue Grill, a very popular restaurant for many years, and Joe's Taco Lounge, and he was a very nice man.

1:06:09 Larry Lautzker: He was great, Joe was great.

1:06:10 Debra Schwartz: And he died, sadly.

1:06:12 Larry Lautzker: And he sadly died.

1:06:13 Debra Schwartz: Yes.

1:06:14 Larry Lautzker: I've run the parade since around 2001. I've been the head of the parade.

1:06:21 Debra Schwartz: I Love A Parade. I like that name.

1:06:22 Larry Lautzker: The I Love A Parade committee. It's interesting because we did a shirt this year for the parade volunteers, of which there are many. But I did a tie-dyed shirt for the summer, in honor of the Summer of Love. And our logo is a beautiful MV with a heart in the middle, and so around the top of the circle of the logo, it says, "I love a parade." And under it, it says, "Love makes it happen." I mixed a few little interesting pieces to that. Shirts are great. In the early '90s, to promote the downtown, I was part of establishing the Winterfest.

1:07:05 Debra Schwartz: The Winterfest, Mill Valley's delightful —

1:07:09 Larry Lautzker: Which includes the Christmas tree lighting and all of the —

1:07:11 Debra Schwartz: Santa comes in on the —

1:07:12 Larry Lautzker: Santa comes in on the little fire engine, LaFrance fire engine.

1:07:16 Debra Schwartz: Food, music.

1:07:17 Larry Lautzker: Food, restaurants and music.

1:07:19 Debra Schwartz: Choirs, ukulele bands.

1:07:20 Larry Lautzker: Don't forget the big mountain of snow that the kids go sledding on in the parking lot.

1:07:24 Debra Schwartz: The big mountain of snow. And ice skating too, right, didn't we have ice skating?

1:07:30 Larry Lautzker: They did that. That's another story. They tried that. I turned it over to the Chamber a few years after we started, and I'm not a big fan of the plastic ice skates on plastic boards.

1:07:48 Debra Schwartz: Well, it was an attempt, in any case.

1:07:50 Larry Lautzker: And where everyone is coming from, that is just really loving Mill Valley and being a part of it. Everyone. It's amazing how many people wanna make a difference in our community. And how many people contribute to whether it's Kiddo! or the ball fields, schools. It's really extraordinary, what goes on in town.

1:08:17 Debra Schwartz: It's a small town, and although people may say otherwise, there's a lot of small town activities that are going on all the time.

1:08:23 Larry Lautzker: There are a lot of big players in Mill Valley, very wealthy, very successful people, who really appreciate the small town quality of life and being a part of something that matters. So there are other places where there's a lot of affluence in Marin, but it doesn't show up like giving back in Mill Valley. People really give a lot of themselves.

1:08:54 Debra Schwartz: You started the I Love A Parade committee, so you're still doing the parade, correct?

1:09:01 Larry Lautzker: Yeah.

1:09:04 Debra Schwartz: So let me just get this clear, the Winterfest, now the Chamber has taken it over for good?

1:09:08 Larry Lautzker: Yeah, it's now the Chamber's deal.

1:09:12 Debra Schwartz: And the thing, for those that are listening to this and may not have attended these, is that all these events as far as — and correct me if I'm wrong — but what you end up having is a collaboration with many of their merchants. People really come together and give what they can, so when you attend, you've got the real sense that there's a community, a family in Mill Valley of merchants or providers. Everybody collaborates, the grocery store, Mill Valley Market —

1:09:43 Larry Lautzker: Everybody.

1:09:44 Debra Schwartz: Equator.

1:09:45 Larry Lautzker: Like I say, I don't know from the inner workings of who contributes to Winterfest these days. The parade is the biggest single event in Mill Valley every year, and one of my roles as the organizer is I round up sponsors. I probably have, between local businesses and individuals, probably 30 to 40 sponsors. So our budget is a pretty big budget to do the parade. And same with the Block Party.

1:10:20 Debra Schwartz: Let's talk about the Block Party. And would you care to say the names of some of your sponsors?

1:10:27 Larry Lautzker: It's interesting, I should get you the list 'cause it's a list —

1:10:29 Debra Schwartz: Why don't you?

1:10:30 Larry Lautzker: It's 30 to 40 names. I'm almost more interested in telling you the names of the people who don't contribute, because probably 85 percent or 90 percent of the businesses in town contribute. I'm more interested in the people who don't contribute. I have a real problem with that. And I've been going public with that lately. People who've been in business in Mill Valley for a long time. And I've been, like I say, raising money since 1990, for all of the different events that I've been a part of, and there's some people in town, who've been in business that long, taking money out of the community — it riles me — who have never given 5 cents. Whether it's a \$50 donation to put the banner up or 100 bucks to have your name on a poster for a local event, don't take money out of the community and then not give 5 cents back. I have a problem with that, I'm sorry. I'm not sorry.

Anyway, I could give you, from Mill Valley Market — I close my eyes, and I think of the stores in Mill Valley: Carolina, Vintage Wines. Vasco Restaurant from day one, has always given to everything. He's probably the biggest contributor of anybody in town, as far as monetarily. All the restaurants in town. Pretty much all the clothing stores in town. Dolls & Dandy, the nail salon. They're people who've come into town recently, opened up the stores, and wanna be part of the community. And so, it's hard to find — like I say, I remember more the people who don't give than the people who give.

1:12:13 Debra Schwartz: And so, maybe that's a shorter list.

1:12:17 Larry Lautzker: It's much shorter. Yeah, but we're not gonna do that.

1:12:22 Debra Schwartz: No, we're not. The fact is that the general trend is, what would you say? 90 percent?

1:12:29 Larry Lautzker: I would say 90 percent.

1:12:31 Debra Schwartz: It's pretty dang good.

1:12:32 Larry Lautzker: It's pretty dang good. For those other people, I pray, as the Dalai Lama would say, I pray to have compassion for the karma they're creating for themselves.

1:12:40 Debra Schwartz: Yes.

1:12:41 Larry Lautzker: I'm not good at that, though. I have a little bit of resentment.

1:12:45 Debra Schwartz: So we've got the I Love A Parade, and the other event.

1:12:48 Larry Lautzker: This year is the 20th year. We started it in 1998 when I moved locations from Blithedale to the center of town. So number 20 coming up. We call it the Mill Valley Community Block Party, and we have raised money for everything from Katrina Relief to prostate awareness to Marin Breast Cancer Watch. The main beneficiaries always have been Kiddo! after school programs, and any number of causes that we could bring attention to and get people involved in. But it's live music, it's a beer garden. This will be the fifth year we do a full-on fashion show. I've built a runway 16 feet out from the stage. So Chicago, Paris, New York, and our fashion show in Mill Valley.

1:13:49 Debra Schwartz: Are your Fashion Police out on that day, or are they enjoying themselves with the rest of the crowd?

1:13:54 Larry Lautzker: They're enjoying themselves. The Fashion Police, as far as our patrolling of Mill Valley, we're always watching, and we could show up at any time. Anyone listening to this should know that they're coming to town, especially during the daytime when the kids are around. Evenings not so much 'cause the kids aren't out. Evenings, we back off a little bit. But when it's the wonderful event the Chamber puts on, the gourmet wine and food tasting, where a lot of people are from outside the community coming to town, we'll patrol those kind of events. If you're coming to Mill Valley, we want people to know.

1:14:32 Debra Schwartz: Be warned.

1:14:33 Larry Lautzker: Be warned. Be warned.

1:14:34 Debra Schwartz: Dress appropriately.

1:14:35 Larry Lautzker: Dress appropriately. Sometimes the Fashion Police will be there, but just helping to raise awareness.

1:14:43 Debra Schwartz: So back to the fashion show, you've got a fashion show? All the local clothing stores?

1:14:50 Larry Lautzker: Several local clothing stores.

1:14:52 Debra Schwartz: Okay.

1:14:53 Larry Lautzker: So Steve & Kate's Camp, which is such a part of —

1:15:00 Debra Schwartz: They're still here?

1:15:02 Larry Lautzker: Steve & Kate's Camp has about 40 camps around the United States now. And they're brilliant. Kate and Steve are brilliant in what they've done, and the educational value of the things that they do, how current they are with their kids. It's not the day camp that I went to or the summer camps that I went to. They still have their camp in Mill Valley, and they provide what we call a kids' zone. So the block party happens from the corner of Throckmorton and Miller to Corte Madera Avenue by the Bank of America, by Mill Valley Market. And at the end of the street where Bank of America is, is a whole kids' area with jumpies or games for them to play, computer games. There's several different things for the kids to do. In between there, in the middle of the block, there's different vendors, and face-painters, and mimes and clowns, and different vendors, different restaurants in town providing food. In the crosswalk at Miller and Throckmorton, I built the stage where the live music happens. And in front of the Depot, on the other side of Lytton Square, the island is a full-on beer garden.

1:16:13 Debra Schwartz: It sounds fabulous!

1:16:14 Larry Lautzker: Yeah, and this is number 20. And we've had Bob Weir from the Grateful Dead, Tommy Castro, some local luminaries. Marty Balin has been part of it. You were mentioning you just interviewed —

1:16:27 Debra Schwartz: Is it Lorin Rowan too?

1:16:29 Larry Lautzker: Lorin Rowan has been a part of it. Audie de Lone, Dan Hicks, Maria Muldaur, Bonnie Hayes. It's a long list of people who performed out there. And this year, we're gonna have Jason Crosby, who's a brilliant musician who has played with everyone from the Dead, and Robert Randolph from The Who, and different people.

1:16:50 Debra Schwartz: It's not David Crosby's son?

1:16:51 Larry Lautzker: No, but people think he is.

1:16:53 Debra Schwartz: 'Cause I know he has a son.

1:16:54 Larry Lautzker: Yeah, but there's no relation.

1:16:57 Debra Schwartz: Did David Crosby ever perform? I think he left before you came.

1:17:02 Larry Lautzker: He left before I came. I have a little history with David. I used to hang out with David when I owned the Phoenix Theater in Petaluma. David did my last show that I ever produced there.

1:17:15 Debra Schwartz: It's a little rough there for you.

1:17:16 Larry Lautzker: It was a little rough. The best thing that ever happened for David was going to jail for a couple of years, saved his life.

1:17:21 Debra Schwartz: So for those of us that don't know the inside story — and this is something I'd like to talk to you about, actually — there is a history of serious alcohol and drug abuse in this area.

1:17:35 Larry Lautzker: Oh yeah.

1:17:36 Debra Schwartz: And David Crosby was a freebaser, and did a lot of drugs, and got into a lot of trouble, and did do some time. And many people have said that his time in jail saved his life.

1:17:49 Larry Lautzker: Saved his life, absolutely.

1:17:51 Debra Schwartz: And you, yourself; it's no secret that you yourself have battled with addiction.

1:17:58 Larry Lautzker: Yeah, it's interesting for me. I, as any good drug addict/ alcoholic will tell you, I really didn't have a problem. People around me thought I had a problem, I was cool. But I also know that my — mostly drug, alcohol wasn't my drug of choice — smoking weed, snorting cocaine, doing psychedelics were more my deal, and everything designed to take me out of myself, not being real comfortable in my own skin or the myriad of reasons people use. But I had a few friends sat me down one day in 1989, June of 1989, and suggested I stop doing what I was doing. And I was ready. At that time, the universe was lining up for me to change what I was doing, and I agreed it was time. But when they presented their case, it was interesting 'cause — and I'll share this with the hope that people listening hear this — they said, "We love you and we know that you're a good person and you do wonderful things in your community, but we wanna see your dreams come true and we're worried that the way you've been abusing yourself, your lifestyle is gonna catch up to you."

And that didn't matter to me. When you're getting close to your bottom or hitting your bottom, your own self-worth doesn't really matter. Them talking about my value, my self-worth didn't really — I didn't have any, and that's a common thread. But one of the people said to me, "You need to know you're killing the people who love you." There's a recovery model built around that these days, 'cause as an addict or alcoholic you don't realize the damage you're causing around you. Such a self-centered disease. And for me, it became painfully clear that if I didn't stop I wouldn't have anyone left around me to love and support me. I'd really be alone. I'd be empty and alone. At least I still have people who cared about me around me. But that got my attention, and I didn't wanna hurt anybody. It never occurred to me the damage I was doing to the people around me.

That was on about the 10th of June in 1989 and I said, "Okay, give me another week and I'll go into recovery." And it's not like I went on any binge, because I never binged. I just liked being the guy that had the big bag of drugs and could show up at a party with weed and blow and get people high. I never overdid it myself, really. I was more addicted to the lifestyle and being the center of attraction, if you will — giving that part of myself up

for what was possible. A week later I went into recovery and that was June 16, 1989. My sobriety birthday is — your first 24 hours of sobriety, your birthday — June 17, 1989, so a little over 28 years now. And I could start crying right now 'cause I have the life that I always knew or always wanted or the respect that I always wanted in the community, and I make a difference to the people around me.

I joke that if I came home back in the days of answering machines and blinking lights and my machine would tell me how many messages there were, and if there weren't 19 messages at least on my phone when I got home on a Friday night — people looking to get drugs from me or hang out because they knew I had drugs — I wasn't successful. I had to give up the answering machine and create a new life for myself. I've been blessed. It's a staggering figure the number of people who make it who are able to put together some clean time 'cause it's less than three percent, it's more like two percent of people who attempt to get clean.

1:22:26 Debra Schwartz: Did you have a little rough start? You just went, literally you turned the page and you never —

1:22:34 Larry Lautzker: Well, being able to go away for 28 days, I went to a program, I went to a great facility, and those 28 days you're really protected, you're really in a safe environment. When you get out you're naked 'cause now you have to deal with society and you have to deal with things without that cushion, that control that you had. You controlled all your emotions, you kept your experience of life in a very narrow band. You didn't have any real highs or any real lows. If things were starting to get rough, you could anesthetize yourself. But I came out to a really strong support system. That's not to say that there weren't moments when I woke up in the middle of the night freaked out about just anything and would call people all over the world 'cause I didn't wanna call anyone locally at 2:00 or 3:00 in the morning.

I'd call people in Europe and say, "I just need to talk to somebody." But that's the key to being successful in the program, I think, is the fellowship of people around you. 'Cause the people who've come before you know what it's like and there's a love. I spent my whole life filling myself up with — or a good part of my life filling myself up with — drugs and alcohol. Well, what was I gonna put in its place? Because there's a hole there. There's an emptiness there and I figured out early on love and gratitude were the key pieces. I think it's something that we're all searching for or wanna have in our lives.

1:24:17 Debra Schwartz: Do you find that in your interactions with the community — for those that don't know — I always like to keep people in the conversation that are listening. Larry, your stories are a watering hole for people. People come, all kinds of people and hang out and talk, be with each other and be with you. More than once I've thought that there was somebody that really had to be with you right then. I've come in and noticed the vibe when somebody here is having a little trouble and they need somebody to be with and that's you.

1:24:54 Larry Lautzker: Yeah, there's a lot of stories like that, a little nexus, a little vortex where the universe opens up and things happen or people are provided for and it's very extraordinary. I don't believe there are accidents, but you look at some of the connections that people have made at a time in their lives when they needed a miracle and miracles happen. I don't know that I've ever said it that way, but real miracles through life, life at stake, miracles, people have been saying they've healed. Not even if it's just for no other reason, just people coming in and would have problems with drugs and alcohol, but way beyond that is where connections are made that are life-altering. And one more gift for me that I get to be there to provide or be a —

1:25:45 Debra Schwartz: A conduit.

1:25:46 Larry Lautzker: A conduit, a connector.

1:25:50 Debra Schwartz: It seems to me that you've gone from early adulthood, early 20s — you're looking for that sanctuary environment which you've lived in in early San Francisco in the Haight district when you were first there. And then you come here and you create an environment where — before that actually, with your bus, you're going from place to place opening windows and doors and consciousness for people, so to speak, and then you're here in your store. Do you find that that's the vibe you like to have?

1:26:24 Larry Lautzker: It's a great point. I just read something — I wish I could tell you the source — but networking, networking is the key to everything. No one has power if they don't share. And so the opportunity for me, I am very clear that my life has to be spent giving back. I've been given an opportunity to be alive and make a difference and give back, 'cause, it's interesting, I was living in San Rafael in 1988 and I walked into my house and there was a gunman in my house and I was held up, tied up, and beat up a little bit, nothing bad but I literally fought with the burglar over the gun 'cause I thought this guy, every other word out of his mouth is, "If this happens, I'll shoot you. If this happens, I'll shoot you. If you don't tell me if someone is coming over and the doorbell rings, you're gonna be a front-page story. I do this for a living. You don't wanna be a front-page story." And when I fought with him over the gun, he didn't shoot me and I let him tie me up after that.

But I called the police and I wanted to report this, and the police came and took a report, and the next day I had to meet with the San Rafael PD. And they had a file on me, going back to Haight-Ashbury in 1971. "We know that you're part of the Good Earth and we know that you did this deal and we know that you had a connection in Lima, Peru and you did this and you did that," and it was very extensive. And to this day, it amazes me that how I never got busted, how I never went to jail, and how I wasn't supposed to, I guess, and I'd better take every advantage I have to give that back, give that blessing back. Just getting sober — once again sobriety, it's not willpower. It's like there's a higher power or force. Some people don't like the word "God." Whether it's just opening your arms and letting yourself be loved and caressed and living in that. That's my life.

1:28:41 Debra Schwartz: How do you receive them? You've got so many people. You're right in the nexus of town, coming in and out of your store. What do you say to people when they walk in? It's not just a store. How are you with people that come visiting? How do you choose to be?

1:29:01 Larry Lautzker: This might encapsulate it in a way. New people come into my life. I think Mill Valley is the most blessed, special place, a geographic chakra, I've come to learn. The mountain is the source of energy, this force on the planet. People have said, this is one of the special power spots on the planet. But when new people come into my store, I welcome them and I acknowledge the blessing that it is that they're now part of Mill Valley. I don't think anyone who makes it, who winds up living in Mill Valley or has lived in Mill Valley for a long time gets here by accident. They have done something whether it's this lifetime or a past lifetime or something that's gonna happen in their life where they end up being in a community that everyone is very focused on making a difference and making the world a better place. It's really the common denominator for me.

1:29:53 Debra Schwartz: How do you acknowledge that?

1:29:54 Larry Lautzker: I just literally say, "I'm so glad to meet you because I think that you that you're blessed to be part of the community. And we're blessed that you're here because you're gonna be a part of something that's very special." I literally, literally say it that way and it amazes me and then you find out who they are and what they've done in their lives and it's — sure, people can complain about affordable housing in Mill Valley and the things that need to get better, but at the same time a lot of those people get it and I think those things will become better and there will be more affordable housing in Mill Valley, the things that we're faced with to keep our community together and values as they are.

1:30:38 Debra Schwartz: What percentage of people come into your store and stay to shop? And what percentage come to stay to talk?

1:30:43 Larry Lautzker: That's very interesting 'cause that's a slippery slope. The whole thing about a specialty store, or anything in our lives, is relationships, so you wanna create relationships with people, whether you're walking down the street and run into someone or smile at someone and put out that good energy. For me as a merchant, I have to think of, "Okay, people have a finite amount of time when they come into the store. How can I move a conversation along and create relationship and at the same time be showing them clothes?" I don't wanna sell anyone clothes, by the way. This part of our thing is that I want people to choose what they're putting on and wear it powerfully. When someone says to me, they look in front of the mirror and say, "This is really great. You sold me." I start the whole process over again, I said, "No, you can't buy it if I sold it to you. I want you to be with what you're wearing and choose it. Choose that when you put it on it's you. You got it. You were wearing it that way."

I don't wanna sell anyone anything. I think we've all had experiences in life where we've shopped and we're surrounded by salespeople and they say, "Wow, you look really great! You should get this!" And then they get home and it sits in their closet for two years. Somehow, though, after two or three years you wind up putting it on and it's cool. I've also found that. But it's my interaction, and how do you empower people? How do you empower people whether you're sitting in a vocal booth being interviewed for this so that anyone that hears this comes away with, "We all have opportunities to make a difference." Choose to make a difference. Don't shy away or think you're too busy. There's people out there that need our help.

1:32:31 Debra Schwartz: Your name is Larry "the Hat."

1:32:33 Larry Lautzker: Yeah.

1:32:34 Debra Schwartz: How did you get that name?

1:32:38 Larry Lautzker: Paul Liberatore from the *IJ*, who's a dear friend and a wonderful writer, Lifestyle and Music editor at the *IJ*, recently wrote a story about me and he asked the same question and my answer to him is my candid answer these days. "If you wanna find out about why they call me Larry "the Hat", come into my store and buy something and I'll tell you the story." [laughs]

1:33:00 Debra Schwartz: Oh, no.

1:33:00 Larry Lautzker: Sorry, gotta work it. It's part of the shtick. [laughs] And it's funny though, 'cause when he finished the article, he writes, "I asked him and this is what he told me." And he wrote that verbatim. [laughs] It's kind of cool.

1:33:15 Debra Schwartz: Oh, that is so unsatisfying.

1:33:18 Larry Lautzker: It's part of my shtick. You have to have some intrigue.

1:33:23 Debra Schwartz: You do have a lot of hats in your store. I noticed you have the pussy hats there.

1:33:27 Larry Lautzker: We have the Mad Hatters, which is interesting, the Mad Hatters. I once booked a band called The Mad Hatters. There are 25 women in town who are wonderful knitters who use the pink pussy hat revolution, and we sell them for 36 bucks. Six bucks goes for the yarn and 30 bucks goes to Planned Parenthood, which is a very cool deal.

1:33:52 Debra Schwartz: Thank you for that. Thank you for your support.

1:33:53 Larry Lautzker: Thank them. Once again, I'll be the connector, I'll be in a place where I can do that.

1:34:01 Debra Schwartz: It does seem that you have a certain power that you can utilize, positioned where you are, and with your interests. For years as I've gone past the store, there seems to be some performer or somebody dressed uniquely, unusual. Dan Hicks, I have to say, had some of the most beautiful clothes I ever saw.

1:34:23 Larry Lautzker: Yeah, Dan got some stuff from me, but Dan used to shop at a store in San Francisco that was called Sissals, I believe, in the Mission. They had the old zoot suit stuff. They still do, they're still there. And he got a lot of his stage wearing stuff like that at Sissals. I can't take credit for that. Dan was a remarkable human being. The first shows we ever did together in 1973, I was part of the group of people that led the first legalization of marijuana on the West Coast. There was NORML on the East Coast and then we had our organization here and we went around doing a bunch of concerts. I'm talking about Lorin Rowan, The Rowan Brothers, Hot Tuna, and the Sons of Champlin were some of the bands.

1:35:03 Debra Schwartz: Local musicians that lived here in Mill Valley.

1:35:04 Larry Lautzker: Well, not in Mill Valley, but Hot Tuna, the guys from Jefferson Airplane, and a lot of great bands. Our tagline was "Free backyard of marijuana. Let it grow. Let it grow. Let it grow." And we were getting people to sign the ballot, sign the petition to get it on the ballot in 1973. And that was my time really connecting with Dan, and we were friends for 40-plus years.

1:35:33 Debra Schwartz: Till he passed away.

1:35:34 Larry Lautzker: He passed away February of last year. I produced his memorial, and the people who showed up — his book just came out called *I Scare Myself*, which is one of his big hits. Elvis Costello wrote the preface and it's a wonderful, wonderful book. He talks about his struggles with drugs and alcohol, too, because Dan spent the last several years of his life sober as well.

1:36:00 Debra Schwartz: Do you live in Mill Valley?

1:36:02 Larry Lautzker: Yeah, I live at Horse Hill.

1:36:03 Debra Schwartz: Oh you live on Horse Hill.

1:36:04 Larry Lautzker: Yeah, right in front of the meadow where the horses come down and hang out.

1:36:10 Debra Schwartz: Near the freeway.

1:36:12 Larry Lautzker: Near the freeway. The freeway is interesting 'cause if you leave the windows open, you hear this kind of white noise sound and it's all hours of the day and night, even at 4:00 in the morning, you'd think there's not a car going by there's this kind of "shhhh," which I call it the ocean.

1:36:28 Debra Schwartz: Yeah, you can hear that sound in a whole lot of places in this town.

1:36:31 Larry Lautzker: It's the ocean.

1:36:31 Debra Schwartz: Are you an outdoorsy guy, Larry? Do you get out much?

1:36:35 Larry Lautzker: I like to think that. I learned something a long time ago, that it's better to be interested than interesting. I don't sit around waiting for something that sounds interesting. I wanna go out and play and be interested in what people offer me, so whether it's, "Let's go for hike, let's go do this, let's go do that," I'm pretty much up for anything. I don't like saying "down with it." I'm not down with it, I'm up with it.
[laughs]

1:37:04 Debra Schwartz: That's great.

1:37:05 Larry Lautzker: There's a story about that, that sounded pretty good. It's easy to sit around waiting for something that sounds interesting, but you don't get a lot of phone calls from people to go out and do that 'cause people get tired of you saying, "Nah, I think I'll just stay home and watch TV."

1:37:24 Debra Schwartz: You're a man on the move.

1:37:25 Larry Lautzker: I'd rather get out there and — life is short — take advantage of all the moments we have.

1:37:32 Debra Schwartz: Are we allowed to talk about this famous poker game in the town of Mill Valley?

1:37:38 Larry Lautzker: I don't think it's relevant necessarily, a bunch of friends who have had a little home poker game for many —

1:37:47 Debra Schwartz: Mill Valley has a home poker game.

1:37:48 Larry Lautzker: Yeah, there's a lot of home poker games in Mill Valley though, at varying levels of ability and stakes. I've been fortunate enough to play in a fairly high stakes game. We all like the rush we get from gambling, and I've been fortunate enough to understand — I'm intrigued with the math and the possibilities of — if you look at poker, the overall view of poker, the most successful poker players they're all backgammon or chess masters. They're all people who understand the math of things, so I'm intrigued with that. And I've done okay in the game. In a way, I shouldn't be a part of the game 'cause I don't have a lot of money and these guys do. They like the action, I like the action, but it's a good game for me to play in 'cause I do okay in that game. They're more about the action than about the science of the game. And not that the science means all that much, because you could be the greatest player in the world and

it's still about 50-50 to win. But we've gone on trips together and these people have been friends for 15-plus years.

1:39:11 Debra Schwartz: This is a cadre of friends.

1:39:13 Larry Lautzker: Yeah. We like each other and it's like a little "boy's club." In one of the guys' houses he has his man cave and he has a little bar set up and big screen TV and we sit there and talk sports and women and wives and children and it's a nice outlet for everybody.

1:39:35 Debra Schwartz: Names shall not be mentioned but there's this amazing game going on. Have you ever played backgammon or chess with the gamer crew over in the Plaza?

1:39:45 Larry Lautzker: I've played some backgammon with those guys. I played chess but I'm not a chess player. Those guys are chess players. But I played a lot of backgammon in my life.

1:39:56 Debra Schwartz: There's all kinds of things going on in this town of Mill Valley. How about the people now that were getting closer to the end of this? It's always good to be grateful, I think, and thankful for those that have been gone ahead of you or guided you in some way. Who would be those people here in this community that have inspired you or been there for you in a way that you feel has been formative?

1:40:25 Larry Lautzker: Well, let me say this — I'll say it this way, that I'm a work in progress. I've been sober for 28 years but my history before that was not thinking a great deal about myself. I didn't have a lot of self-esteem, and throughout my life there are people who have chosen me to be a part of something. My racket, if you will, was always that I'm not good enough, but yet they chose me so somehow I fooled them. And they're the most extraordinary people, they're people who are tremendous successes — what I see in their personal lives and their professional lives — and yet they've chosen me to be a part of something and given me important positions. I'm still catching up to that. And I don't know if I ever will actually go "wow" and at least consistently reflect that I've lived a very successful life when it comes to being, in my mind now, being someone of substance, someone of quality. I didn't have that for a long time. And so sometimes it blows my mind some of the people that I interact with.

There's so many extraordinary people in Mill Valley that come to me for advice or offer me an opportunity to be involved in a production that they're doing, 'cause still my two loves: I love selling clothes and being a part of people that way socially, and I still love production, my opportunity to put on concerts. We could talk about the fact that I got to start what is now the Sweetwater. I got to start the venue that's home to Terrapin Crossroads now. The Comedy Show was my creation at the Throckmorton Theatre. I've been in a position to make things like that happen. To work with Dr. Larry Brilliant who Time Magazine called one the 100 most powerful people on the planet, a man that ended small pox on the planet, to work with Robin Williams and lots of other people who led

the way in so many different areas of our lives, from health, to music, to art, to just the general wellbeing, I get to call those people my friends. And their history speaks for itself. They're giants among men, if you will, but I've gotten to stand alongside them and now I'll start crying 'cause — tears.

1:43:18 Debra Schwartz: Tears are fine.

1:43:19 Larry Lautzker: Tears are fine, yeah. It's a blessing to be here in town and be loved and respected by an entire community of people. My dreams are coming true. I'm done right now.

1:43:39 Debra Schwartz: Yep.

1:43:39 Larry Lautzker: Yeah.

1:43:39 Debra Schwartz: I think that says it all. Larry, thanks so much for sharing your story and your time with us today. Thanks so much for all that you do for our community and our town and for the children. [chuckles]

1:43:55 Larry Lautzker: Do it for the children. Like I say, my only hope is that more people get to experience that blessing of being able to give back and take advantage of those opportunities when it comes their way, 'cause at the end of the day you could have all the toys and the big house and all the money, but if you didn't give anything back, if you didn't really give more, you'll end up wondering, "What was it all about?"

1:44:27 Debra Schwartz: Agreed.

1:44:28 Larry Lautzker: As in the work you're doing, we know that. Kindred spirits..

1:44:36 Debra Schwartz: Thank you very much. I think that concludes the interview.

1:44:40 Larry Lautzker: The thought for today. [chuckles]

1:44:41 Debra Schwartz: Thanks so much and —

1:44:43 Larry Lautzker: Do you have a tissue?

1:44:44 Debra Schwartz: Yes, I do.

1:44:44 Larry Lautzker: Or as Groucho Marx would say, "Tissue? I hardly even know you." [chuckles]

1:44:50 Debra Schwartz: Okay, let's call this a wrap.

1:44:53 Larry Lautzker: It's a wrap! Cut!